

60. The method of manufacturing a photomask blank according to claim 50, wherein the thin film is formed by inline sputtering.

61. The method of manufacturing a photomask blank according to claim 58, wherein the thin film is formed by inline sputtering.

62. The method of manufacturing a photomask blank according to claim 59, wherein the thin film, or the thin film and the nitride film, is or are formed by inline sputtering.

63. The method of manufacturing a photomask blank according to claim 50, wherein the thin film further contains chromium.

64. The method of manufacturing a photomask blank according to claim 50, wherein the transparent substrate is composed of quartz glass.

65. A method of manufacturing a photomask, wherein a mask pattern is formed by selectively removing the film formed on the transparent substrate of a photomask blank obtained by the manufacturing method of claim 50.

66. A method of forming a micropattern, in which a fine pattern is formed over a substrate by photolithography,

wherein the photomask according to claim 49 is used as a mask in transferring the fine pattern.

REMARKS

Claims 31-66 are pending herein. By this Preliminary Amendment, claims 1-30 are canceled in favor of newly added claims 31-66.

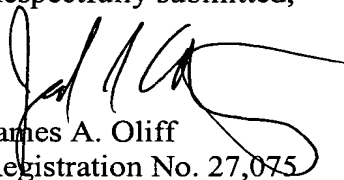
By this Preliminary Amendment, the claims are revised so as to recite that the shading film includes one or more transition metals or compounds thereof (each of independent claims 31, 32, 50 and 51), to indicate that helium is contained in the shading film to reduce

film stress (each of independent claims 31 and 50), and/or to indicate a limitation on the amount of helium present (each of independent claims 31, 32 and 50-52). No new matter is added by this Preliminary Amendment.

In view of the foregoing amendments, Applicants submit that claims 31-66 are in condition for allowance. An early and favorable action on the merits is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,


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